

The Problems Facing the Soviet Union

(Article III in the series on the Opposition in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.)

By BERTRAM WOLFE.

REVOLUTIONARY leaders are most severely tested in periods of difficulty.

It is far more difficult to retreat or to move very slowly, to take defeat and not be demoralized, to face difficulties and not give way to despair, than it is to move at the head of a

revolutionary army that is sweeping everything before it.

When the revolution rushes from success to success, it is easy to be a revolutionary.

Two Types of Leaders.

Leaders may be divided into two types in this respect.

One is the dynamic generator of revolutionary energy.

Further "Pacification" of Nicaragua

The systematic slaughter of the heroic Nicaraguans who refused to abandon hope of maintaining an independent national existence goes steadily on. When Nicaraguans, under the leadership of the mine worker, Sandino, are murdered wholesale it is scarcely news in the kept press of the United States, but when any of the deluded fools, playing the role of gunmen of imperialism, bite the dust before the resistance of the Nicaraguans the headlines madly screech that outlaws have murdered American heroes.

In the heaviest engagement in which American forces have participated since the world war, five marines are reported to have been killed and thirty wounded in an engagement with the forces of Sandino. No report of the deaths of Nicaraguans is available, but their casualties are said to have been heavier than those of the marines, because of inferior fighting equipment.

One fact, however, stands out in the reports of this latest attack of the imperialist bandits and that is the heavy damage administered the United States forces.

The first engagement in which marines were killed resulted in the death of but two, while 300 Nicaraguans were killed and 100 wounded. After that mass murder last July 16, the Mellon-Coolidge-Kellogg administration announced that Nicaragua had been pacified, that Sandino's forces were dispersed and that the policy of Henry L. Stimson, which was the Coolidge-Wall Street policy, would be put into effect without further disturbances. After the mass murder of July the subservient government of the Wall Street puppet Diaz, (placed in office and maintained in power by the armed forces of the United States against the will of the majority of the inhabitants of Nicaragua) began the organization of a national militia, under command of marine officers. This was considered necessary because the vandalism of the American troops exposed to the world the hypocritical spread-eagle orators' boast that "civilization follows the flag," and aroused political antagonism at home and abroad. The native militia was to be substituted for the marines in order to create the fiction that the warfare in Nicaragua was a domestic quarrel instead of a Wall Street war against the independence of Nicaragua.

But the defenders of Nicaraguan independence were evidently able to maintain themselves in the field and even improve their equipment so that the native forces were unable to cope with them. Hence the marines are continuing their murderous role against Sandino's forces. This latest engagement proves that, in spite of the claims of Stimson and Kellogg, Nicaragua is not yet completely subdued.

Before the conquest of that country is complete hundreds, perhaps thousands, of natives and American soldiers will be slaughtered in order that American imperialism may become mightier than ever.

Nicaragua subdued means free sailing for American imperialism to build a second inter-ocean canal, connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific, as a part of its general world policy of imperialism, and to enable it to subdue all Latin America.

Nicaragua is only the beginning of the conquest of that section of Latin America. If successful in Nicaragua the armed forces of the United States will proceed to crushing other southern republics. It will initiate a policy of armed conquest that will continue for years. The time to stop this wholesale slaughter is now.

Let the workers and impoverished farmers in the United States, themselves victims of the most vicious ruling class that ever existed, organize politically to place in the pillory the murderous Wall Street government at Washington.

Parents and relatives of the dupes who joined the armed forces to "see the world," and "secure an education" and other benefits advertised in the recruiting posters designed to attract unemployed workers, should not aid the murderers of these young men by joining in the Wall Street clamor against the Nicaraguans, but should denounce the predatory government at Washington for using them as cannon fodder and demand that all American forces be instantly withdrawn from Nicaragua so that the people of that country may live an independent existence, free from the ravages of the jackal pack of dollar despotism.

The other is the passive absorber of such energy when it "permeates the atmosphere."

In the first there is an unshakable faith in the revolutionary power of the masses which shows more clearly the greater the difficulties to be overcome. In the second is a readiness to give way to despair in moment of defeat and difficulty. Slow "undramatic" work, requiring patience, requiring "stubbornness" and determination, without prospect of immediate startling successes and the immediate solution of all difficulties—such work demoralizes the second type of leader.

Ultra-Leftism and Opportunism.

When difficulties multiply he begins seeking desperately for "short cuts" that do not exist. He "jumps over" the difficulties, gets rid of them by denying their existence, develops an unrealistic program which sounds tremendously revolutionary but is out of all harmony with the real situation it is intended to fit and therefore dangerous to the success of the revolutionary movement. Or he tends to exaggerate the difficulties, to become panicky and to propose a retreat so rapid that it amounts to rout or complete surrender and would lead to the complete demoralization of the revolutionary ranks.

Usually, there is a mixture of both kinds of flight from the difficult situation, denial of its existence and exaggeration of the difficulties. Ultra-leftism and opportunism go hand in hand.

Difficulties Faced by the USSR.

THE working class of the Soviet Union faces many difficulties in its path to socialism. They must build socialism in a land that is industrially backward, that was economically dependent for capital and machinery upon other countries, that is surrounded by hostile capitalist nations.

A conflict is approaching between the imperialist powers and the Soviet Union. In Western Europe capitalism has been temporarily stabilized.

The revolutionary movements inspired in Germany, Hungary, Finland, Italy, etc., by the example of the Russian workers have resulted in temporary but decisive defeats. The longed-for "revolution in the West" has been delayed.

The Soviet Union cannot count upon the "state aid" of the victorious proletariat of an advanced industrial nation. Nor can it expect anything but enmity and attack from the capitalist powers surrounding it. The Soviet Union must build socialism out of its own resources on the basis of its own class forces.

Getting Rid of Stabilization.

THIS prospect terrifies the opposition. Trotsky has declared that the Soviet Union cannot build socialism "without the state aid of successful revolutions in other countries." The opposition has repeatedly denied that any progress in the direction of building socialism is being made. At the same time, it has proposed desperate "get-rich-quick" schemes, revolutionary "short-cuts" to socialism that avoid facing the hard realities and difficulties of the process.

The stabilization of capitalism terrifies them and plunges them into despair. They propose revolutionary-sounding short cuts to the world revolution, as in the case of the proposal to break the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee, to raise prematurely the slogan of "build Soviets" in China, and many other efforts to swing the Comintern and its various sections into the path of ultra-leftist adventurism. They suddenly revise the united front tactics or propose their abandonment, urge measures that would lead to the abandonment of work in the reactionary unions.

Zinoviev went so far as to get rid of stabilization by the simple process of denying the existence of stabilization altogether, by declaring in proposed theses that the period of stabilization was at an end. Capitalism was again in complete collapse and the only thing preventing the rapid spread and victory of the world revolution was the opportunistic policies of the Comintern, that prevented the revolution from beginning.

Progress Raises New Problems.

THE very progress that has taken place inside the Soviet Union during the last few years has only added to the pessimism of the opposition. And this is not an accident, for the progress in the rebuilding of industry has brought new problems to the fore and made them stand out more clearly.

The basic problem of the Soviet Union is the building of socialism. During the first few years after the revolution and the civil war, this was primarily a problem of rebuilding old industries. Now it is chiefly a matter of building new industries.

"Reconstruction" Period Ended.

The period which is loosely characterized as the period of reconstruction is at an end. The broken down factories have been repaired, old machinery replaced, closed factories reopened, abandoned mines reoccupied, the pre-war level of production reached and passed.

While even in this period some accomplishments and important ones, are to be recorded in the building up of new industries and in the putting of old industries on a new technical and economic-political basis, still the period remains predominantly a period of rebuilding and restoration.

The Problem of Socialist Construction

NOW, however, there are no abandoned factories and mines and railroads to be restored. It is no longer a question of repairing ruined industry and getting it going again.

Now the center of attention shifts to the construction of new industry. The pre-war level has been reached on a somewhat new and higher basis, but the Soviet Union remains predominantly agrarian. It must be industrialized. It must produce not only consumption goods but machinery itself. It must develop heavy industry into dominant industry. It must make itself economically independent, if need be, of the capitalist world.

Paths of Industrialization.

BUT how does a country industrialize itself?

England industrialized itself by ruthless exploitation of colonies for hundreds of years. The Soviet Union cannot exploit colonies. It is the enemy of colonial exploitation.

Germany industrialized itself by a war of conquest in which it seized the iron and coal regions of Alsace Lorraine and exacted billions of francs in "war reparations." But the way of aggressive war and pillage of the defeated country is impossible to the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union.

Old czarist Russia made such little progress as it did in industrialization by inviting imperialist finance capital to take over its resources through concessions and to exploit the Russian masses mercilessly. This also is against the principles on which the Soviet Union is founded.

The Problem of Socialist Accumulation.

SO the problem is, where will the Soviet Union get the funds (the "capital") to build new industries, to industrialize the nation, to build socialism? It is around this question, of how to accumulate the funds for the building of socialist industry, that

Upon a summer day.
He braved the grim Atlantic
And showed war-planes the way.

To Mexico's far borders
Our peace-time hero went
And carried "good-will" greetings
On Wall Street's mission bent.

And so to other countries
Our messenger would fly
To spread the empire's gospel
And blaze across the sky.

A threat to every nation
Of what our country brings
In war: the sudden terror
That swoops on eagle's wings!

—HENRY REICH, JR.

the basic controversies turn, that have been agitating the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. They are often summed up under the general term "the problem of socialist accumulation."

This general problem divides itself into many subjects of controversy. A few typical ones are:

1. Can the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union build up socialism without the aid of foreign capital or successful revolutions in other countries?

To this question the opposition generally answers in the negative.

2. Where will the funds come from for the building of new industries?

To this question the opposition makes many different and contradictory answers.

Some of these are:

a.—Get the funds by exploiting the peasantry.

b.—Get the funds by big increases in taxation of the peasantry.

c.—Get them by raising wholesale prices.

d.—Get them by making very much bigger concessions to foreign capital than we have so far made.

e.—Withdraw the funds which the state has invested in co-operatives.

f.—Withdraw the funds which the state has invested in trade.

g.—Get them by the rapid building up of agriculture and export of agricultural products with import of manufactured goods and machinery.

h.—Get them by seizures of grain.

i.—Get them from the Kulak, the Nepman, and the bureaucracy.

j.—Get them by loosening up the monopoly on foreign trade.

k.—You can't get them unless there are successful revolutions in other countries and direct governmental aid from these proletarian states as they are set up.

The proposals of the opposition under these various heads will be analyzed in subsequent articles.

Is Soviet Russia Building Socialism?

3. Is Russia heading towards socialism or away from it? The opposition gives various answers to this. In general the trend of their answers is "Russia is either standing still or degenerating and moving away from socialism." Often their answer is that it is impossible for her to move toward socialism without the aid of other countries.

4. Are the industries of the Soviet Union of such character that they can be described as basically socialist or basically capitalist? The opposition tends to describe the industries of the Soviet Union as state capitalism under proletarian control.

5. Are the Kulaks and the Nepmen being overcome or outstripped by the development of socialist industry or are they growing faster than socialist industry?

6. Can the Soviet Union continue to endure at all if capitalism remains in the saddle in the Western European countries?

7. If it continues to endure, will it be able to build socialism, or will it degenerate and move back towards capitalism?

(To Be Continued).